

SEX, RACE, AND JOB STATUS DIFFERENCES  
IN PERCEPTIONS OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITY CLIMATE

by

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### Abstract

The Military Equal Opportunity Climate Survey (MEOCS) is a measure of perceptions of equal opportunity climate (EO) in the military. This study compared the scores of Whites and Blacks, males and females, and officers and enlisted personnel on their perceptions of EO. Not surprisingly, Whites, males, and officers were found to have more positive feelings about EO climate than Blacks, females, or enlisted personnel.

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The Military Equal Opportunity Climate Survey (MEOCS; Landis, Fisher, & Dansby, 1988; Landis, 1990; Dansby & Landis, 1990) is an 88-item measure of perceptions of equal opportunity climate (EO) in the military. The scale was developed at the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute (DEOMI), Patrick Air Force Base, Florida, and field tested using a sample of 1656 military personnel from all branches of the Services. The survey was subsequently reduced to 50 items and is being used by field commands to assess equal opportunity issues. Demographic aspects of the field test sample, on which the present study is based, appear in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic Aspects of MEOCS Development Sample\*

<u>Race</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Service</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>N</u>
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	34	Air Force	83	Females	583
Asian	29	Army	407	Males	1034
Black	526	Navy	316	Total	1617
Hispanic	49	Marines	165	<u>Status</u>	<u>N</u>
White	959	Coast Guard	100	Officer	466
Other	24	Total	1071	Enlisted	1141
Total	1621			Total	1607

\*Numbers within columns vary because of respondent errors in survey completion.

One interesting way to consider equal opportunity climate is in terms of how the various subgroups of the sample view it. That is, it seems plausible that there would be differences in the ways in which men and women, Blacks and Whites, and officers and enlisted personnel perceive the EO climate in their respective work environments. Differences in EO climate score as measured by MEOCS would give some indication of the effects of race, sex, or job status on perceptions of EO climate.

Means and standard deviations on two measures of EO perceptions were computed for the six groups listed previously. The first of these measures, labeled Satisfaction with EO Climate, was computed by summing how an individual respondent saw his or her EO climate (1 = Very Poor to 5 = Very Good) and how this individual felt others in his or her unit saw EO climate.

The second measure of perception of EO climate was a sum of total score on the MEOCS. Factor and item analytic studies of the responses of the 1656 participants in the study identified 29 items having the greatest predictive utility. The sum of the scores on these 29 items was labeled EOScore. Descriptive statistics for scores on these two measures are presented in Table 2.

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Table 2  
Means and Standard Deviations on Two Measures  
Of Equal Opportunity Climate

<u>Group</u>	<u>Satisfaction</u>		<u>EOScore</u>	
	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>
Enlisted	6.29	2.04	63.16	19.13
Officers	7.44	1.94	69.52	20.46
Females	6.36	1.98	61.53	20.16
Males	6.79	2.12	67.14	19.13
Blacks	5.78	1.99	58.51	19.58
Whites	7.14	1.96	68.65	18.73

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Are the perceived differences in EO climate between men and women, Whites and Blacks, and officers and enlisted significant? Appropriate t-tests of the differences between means for these groups were performed. Results of this analysis are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Significance of Differences in EO Climate  
In Terms of Gender, Race, and Job Status

<u>Groups</u>	<u>Measure of EO Climate</u>	<u>t value</u>	<u>Level</u>
Males/Females	Satisfaction	-4.11	.000
Table 3 (cont.)	EOScore	-5.35	.000
<u>Groups</u>	<u>Measure of EO Climate</u>	<u>t value</u>	<u>Level</u>
Blacks/Whites	Satisfaction	12.72	.000
	EOScore	9.40	.000
Officers/ Enlisted	Satisfaction	10.53	.000
	EOScore	5.63	.000

As evidenced by the t-tests, there are significant differences in feelings about equal opportunity between the various groups. Not surprisingly, white males and officers were the most positive about equal opportunity in the military. Blacks, females, and enlisted personnel were less satisfied, both in terms of the summed perception score (labeled Satisfaction) and in terms of their responses to the 29 most predictive items of the MEOCS (labeled EOScore).

A further analysis of MEOCS results contrasted the correlations between MEOCS score (EOScore) and global ratings of satisfaction with EO climate (Satisfaction) across gender, job status, and racial groups. As expected, the correlations between Satisfaction and EOScore were significant at the .001 level for all groups. These results are presented in Table 4.

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Table 4

Correlations Between Satisfaction and EO Score  
For Six Groups

<u>Group</u>	<u>r</u>
Females	.448
Males	.429
Officer	.438
Enlisted	.417
Blacks	.395
Whites	.397

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Significance of the differences between correlation coefficients for independent samples may be computed by transforming the coefficients using Fisher's  $z_r$  transformation. Transforming the values and using an error value of  $s_{zr} = 1/N-3$  gives the ratio of:

$$z = \frac{z_{r1} - z_{r2}}{\sqrt{1/(N_1 - 3) + 1/(N_2 - 3)}}$$

Using the Fisher transformation, comparisons between groups were made on the basis of gender, job status, and race. Results of these comparisons, all of which were nonsignificant, are in Table 5.

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Table 5

Values and Significance Of Transformed Correlations

<u>Groups</u>	<u>Transformed r</u>	<u>Significance</u>
Males x Females	1.503	n.s.
Officers x Enlisted	0.266	n.s.
Black x White	0.000	n.s.

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As a final note, it is important to remember that the MEOCS is a measure of perception and scores on the scale may not be an accurate reflection of the equality of opportunity. A further study of the congruence of perception scores and actual promotion and discipline rates by race, gender, and job status would be useful in clarifying the relationship between attitude toward EO and the actual implementation of EO policies.

### References

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